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TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [FR](#) [AF](#) [PK](#) [SO](#)  
SUBJECT: U.S. AMBASSADOR TO NATO DISCUSSES AFGHANISTAN,  
PAKISTAN, PIRACY AND NATO SUMMIT WITH FRENCH OFFICIALS

REF: PARIS 1696

Classified By: Pol M/C Kathleen Allegrone for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This message contains an action request -- please see paragraph 8.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary. On September 5-6, U.S. Ambassador to NATO Kurt Volker met with Francois Richier, Strategic Affairs Advisor to President Sarkozy and Michel Miraillet, the Director of Strategic Affairs at the MOD, to discuss NATO operations in Afghanistan, efforts to combat piracy off the horn of Africa, recent developments in Pakistan and next year's 60th anniversary NATO summit to be held in the border towns of Strasbourg and Kehl. Additional discussions on the Russia-Georgia conflict and its impact on NATO were reported septel. End summary.

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FIRST PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON TROOP DEPLOYMENTS  
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[1](#)3. (C) With both interlocutors, Amb. Volker opened the discussion on Afghanistan by expressing USG condolences on the August 18 loss of 10 French soldiers serving under ISAF. Richier noted that, following the recent constitutional changes voted into law this summer, the French Parliament will hold a historic first vote on September 22 to approve the French deployments to Afghanistan. (Embassy comment: Previously, the authority to deploy troops fell solely to the French President; with the constitutional changes, Parliament must now approve of any troop deployments within four months. The reform does not go into effect until 2009, but the Sarkozy government opted to bring it into force now.) In the debate, the French government will focus on real progress that has been made since the pledge of additional French troops at the Bucharest summit in April. Given the parliamentary majority enjoyed by President Sarkozy's UMP party, the Elysee expects to win the historic vote, but admitted that it will have to devote further efforts to ensure long-term support for Afghanistan within the French parliament. Miraillet agreed, noting that the GOF needs to do more public diplomacy generally to increase public support for the French deployments. He added that DefMin Morin will be accompanying the families of the dead French soldiers to Afghanistan in the near future.

[1](#)4. (C) Amb. Volker noted that there is now a better understanding in Europe that our mutual security depends on what happens in Afghanistan, but NATO can still refine its implementation strategy to provide more reconstruction and development assistance, increase counter-narcotics efforts and increase capacity building of the Afghan government so it can assume greater responsibility for the situation. He

observed that while the Taliban are able to mount individual attacks in areas throughout the country, they can only do so in a sustained and strategic manner mainly in the south. The Taliban is increasing its effort to target the Afghan people's sense of personal security and to place pressure on the weak Afghan government. Miraillet noted that NATO forces should expect to stay in Afghanistan for a minimum of 15 years, but that French politicians are reluctant to say so. He added that the GOF is focused on getting other countries to remove their caveats on their troops, which contributes to a false public perception that NATO allies may have failed in force protection. DefMin Morin expects to travel again to Afghanistan at the end of the year and hopes to bring his German counterpart with him to see operations in the south.

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NATO-UNAMA COOPERATION AND COUNTERNARCOTICS  
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15. (C) Amb. Volker informed both interlocutors of USG efforts to coordinate better between ISAF and UNAMA. The debate over the handling of a video in the hands of Kai Eide, the UN Special Representative in Afghanistan is a case in point. The gory video purports to report on massive civilian casualties inflicted by NATO forces; however the veracity of the video and its claims need to be investigated. Afghan Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak had told Amb. Volker that the video is the work of the Iranian intelligence services. The coalition forces' assessment is that there were 35 casualties, seven of which were civilian, in the battle portrayed in the video. The USG would like for UNAMA to conduct an investigation jointly with ISAF and ANA military. Amb. Volker also argued that it is ultimately not helpful to

dispute numbers. We should instead focus on how to prevent civilian casualties in the future and how such incidents should be investigated when accusations are made.

16. (C) Richier informed us that the GOF is reviewing what NATO can do to assist counter-narcotic efforts, noting that the Afghans do not support large-scale eradication. Amb. Volker responded that NATO could assist in targeting drug labs, transport networks and the high-end traffickers, which financially support the Taliban through profits from the drug trade. The Afghan government cannot combat these networks on its own. Richier agreed, but noted GOF concerns that ISAF involvement in counter-narcotics could lead to increased civilian casualties, an already sensitive subject. Miraillet also observed that there is a legal question about having military forces fighting civilians (albeit armed drug traffickers). Richier and Miraillet both said that it would be important for any counter-narcotic operations to be a mix of ISAF and Afghan security forces, so the effort has an Afghan face. Amb. Volker agreed that we want Afghan participation, but stressed that they do not yet have the capacity to take on these tasks by themselves. Richier also highlighted the GOF's continued interest in developing controls for countries that produce the pre-cursor chemicals used in the drug labs.

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PAKISTAN  
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17. (C/NF) Miraillet noted that the French are very concerned about Pakistan; Musharraf is leaving but the political parties are focused on fighting amongst themselves. Pakistani Army Chief General Kayani has reported that the morale within the Pakistani army is low following several defeats in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Miraillet informed us that the French and UK experts will be meeting again this week and suggested setting up a permanent trilateral dialogue with the UK, France and U.S. on Afghanistan and Pakistan issues.

18. (S/NF) Richier informed us that the GOF expects to have high-level meetings soon with Pakistanis and emphasized that

France would like to coordinate its message with the USG. Specifically, the GOF is interested in obtaining any briefing papers or talking points that were used by General Petraeus in his recent meeting with Pakistan's Army Chief General Kayani. (ACTION REQUEST: Post would appreciate receipt soonest of any talking points or other information that we can share with the French President's office. END ACTION REQUEST.) Richier also referred to a recent conversation with the NSC, asking for the rationale for eliminating the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Amb. Volker said we would try to get French interlocutors more information from our perspective on Pakistan, noting that the government and military share our goals in combating extremists, but their capabilities are limited.

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PIRACY ALONG AFRICAN COAST  
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¶9. (C) Amb. Volker stated that the rising problem of piracy off the horn of Africa is an important issue. He observed that if the EU is prepared to mount a naval mission to combat piracy, the USG could support such an initiative, though we would assume that such a mission would bring new naval assets to the table. To the extent that such a mission would rely on existing naval forces, currently the CTF-150 and NATO's Standing NAVAL Maritime Group (SNMG), however, we would want NATO authorities to examine the implications and provide advice. Richier reassured us that the Presidency is focused on obtaining additional ships to provide a security convoy as soon as possible; they have no interest in getting into an institutional debate over whether that mission should be under NATO or the EU. The issue is particularly sensitive in France, which just had two more citizens taken hostage. Currently, the GOF is pursuing discussions within the EU, because their EU counterparts have informed them that new capabilities would only be possible if the anti-piracy mission is under the authority of the ESDP. However, Richier stated firmly that the French delegation at NATO has received precise guidance not to block discussion on this issue. He added that the EU should make a decision on this ESDP mission by September 15. He noted the concern of some within the GOF that a NATO tasking would divert the discussion within the EU and delay approval of the ESDP mission.

¶10. (C) Amb. Volker said that the USG supports a 2-part tasking to NATO that would: (1) assess the impact that any potential loss of assets would have on NATO missions in the area, should ships be taken out of CTF-150 or the SNMG to provide support for an ESDP mission; and (2) assess what NATO can do (taking into account what others, such as the EU, are doing as well). Richier said that the two proposals are eminently practical. He observed that the TF-150 was established in 2001 to combat terrorism, but since that time no terrorist had been apprehended. It may be worth considering to expand the mission of the TF-150 to combat piracy as well. Amb. Volker said that since the SNMG will be there anyway, maybe we should task it with anti-piracy activities, rather than pull ships from it to create a new mission. Miraillet noted that some countries may have legal problems with expanding the SNMG or CTF-150 missions, such as Spain, which doesn't have a law against piracy on its books. (Background note: Spain supports the EU initiative to counter piracy given that a large number of Spanish fishing boats have been recent victims of piracy in these waters). Amb. Volker noted that this argument would seem to apply whether it was a NATO, EU or coalition operation.

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60TH ANNIVERSARY NATO SUMMIT  
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¶11. (C) When Amb. Volker inquired about planning and preparations for the 60th anniversary NATO summit to be held in April 2009 in Strasbourg and Kehl (towns on both sides of the French-German border), Richier admitted frankly that until now the GOF is focused on the French Presidency of the

European Union. However, the GOF would like the summit to be an introspective look at NATO's future, to include a declaration to launch the process for a new strategic concept to give direction to NATO's transformation. Richier hoped that France's return to NATO would help energize this process. Amb. Volker stressed our desire to work closely with France in preparing the Summit.

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NATO RESPONSE FORCE  
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¶12. (C) Miraillet said that DefMin Morin will travel to London for the September 18-19 informal meeting of NATO Defense Ministers and he will likely attend the dinner and the roundtable on force generation that will discuss the NATO Response Force (NRF). Amb. Volker inquired whether the GOF is considering lowering the threshold for an NRF deployment. Miraillet responded that for the French, the NRF must meet two principles: (1) The NRF must be able to deploy quickly; and (2) the NRF must only be deployed for a limited period of time. Amb. Volker observed that we face a dilemma: if the NRF is filled, then force generation sometimes fails; on the other hand, if countries make forces available for current operations, then they are not available for the NRF. We therefore need more flexibility and deployability. Miraillet agreed, but then noted (in a flash of honesty) that some countries would not add forces to the NRF if they would actually be used.

¶13. (U) Ambassador Volker has cleared this message.

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STAPLETON